Table of Contents

1. ThunderClan cats
2. PROLOGUE
3. Chapter 1: Bramblestar
4. Chapter 2: Tawnypelt
5. Chapter 3: Shadepaw
6. Chapter 4: Bramblestar
7. Chapter 5: Shadepaw
8. Chapter 6: Bramblestar
9. Chapter 7: Bramblestar
10. Chapter 8: Shadepaw
11. Chapter 9: Bramblestar
12. Chapter 10: Shadepaw
13. Chapter 11: Bramblestar
14. Epilogue
15. Excerpt from Warriors: The Unknown Threat Series Book #2: Endless Rivalry

ThunderClan cats

[image]

I do not own any original characters/clans from the warriors series by erin hunter. please enjoy reading this warriors fans.

ThunderClan

Clan Leader

Bramblestar

Deputy

Squirrelflight

Medicine Cat

Jayfeather

Apprentice, Shadepaw

Warriors

Lionblaze

Foxleap

Icecloud

Sandstorm

Graystripe

Dovewing

Falcontail

Apprentice, Wavepaw

Berrynose

Toadstep

Rosepetal

Sorreltail

Lilyblossom

Seedfur

Poppyfrost

Cherrypelt

Molefur

Millie

Thornclaw

Spiderleg

Dustpelt

Brackenfur

Floodface

Flowerburst

Apprentice, Woodpaw

Birchfall

Mousewhisker

Ivypool

Cloudtail

Brightheart

Bumblestripe

Blossomfall

Queens (she-cats nursing or expecting kits)

Cinderheart (expecting Lionblaze's kits)

Daisy

Squirrelflight (nursing Bramblestar's kits: Grasskit, Groundkit, and Cavekit)

Elders

Purdy

PROLOGUE

[image]

PROLOGUE

The cool night air whispered softly as a large group of cats began to gather around a white cat with jet black paws. Each of the cats were lean and thin, and growing hungrier with every passing day. The fresh-kill pile was unusually small, with only a skinny mouse, three scrawny frogs, and two gaunt thrushes. The kits mewled pitifully, with one crying unhappily, “Milk! Milk!” Even the queens comforting meows couldn’t soothe them.

A brown tom with sparkling blue eyes padded towards the white cat anxiously. “Blackstar, you haven’t eaten in days! You are starting to look like a pile of bones with skin! Seriously, you must eat, no matter how badly the Clan is starving. The Clan needs its leader, and the last thing we need is for you to die.”

Blackstar hesitated for a moment, before replying, “The Clan must come first, Littlecloud. I am merely one cat, out of all of these warriors.”

Littlecloud’s nostrils flared. “You’re our leader!” he exclaimed, a little too loudly. Anxious, questioning murmurs broke out from the group. Quieter, he whispered, “Blackstar, I’m a medicine cat. I know that you’re on your last life. You must eat!” He added nervously, “We need to get more food, Blackstar. ShadowClan won’t survive the approaching leaf-bare without it.”

Blackstar’s eyes suddenly lit up. “I know exactly where to get more fresh-kill, Littlecloud!”

Littlecloud looked at him with curiosity and hope. “What has StarClan shown you? Where is there more prey?”

Blackstar looked at him intensely. “ThunderClan,” he meowed finally.

“What!?” Littlecloud exclaimed, outraged. He was too angry to control even how loud he spoke. The crowd looked at the medicine cat, frightened and worried. “I don’t believe you, Blackstar! It’s against the warrior code! It can’t be StarClan’s will and you…” the medicine cat broke off as Blackstar silenced Littlecloud by shoving his bushy tail into Littlecloud’s mouth.

“StarClan’s will is for ShadowClan to survive, and that is what we shall do,” Blackstar whispered stubbornly.

Then to the crowd, he meowed, “Over the last moon, prey in our territory has become much scarcer than it used to be. ShadowClan is starving.”

“Tell us something we don’t know,” one of the elders snorted.

“StarClan wants us to thrive,” Blackstar declared. Littlecloud tried to say something, but all he got was a mouthful of Blackstar’s tail. “I have discovered a way to get more food.”

Hopeful mews came from the cats. Littlecloud couldn’t speak but he shook his head frantically. “We will hunt in ThunderClan territory,” Blackstar finished.

A she-cat exclaimed, “No! I won’t do it, even if I have to starve! You mustn’t steal from ThunderClan!”

“I always knew you were a traitor, Tawnypelt!” Blackstar spat.

“It’s against the warrior code! That can’t be StarClan’s will!” Tawnypelt hissed.

“StarClan’s will is *not* for ShadowClan to starve!”Blackstar growled. His tail raised straight up out of anger, giving Littlecloud the chance to shout, “Cats of ShadowClan! It is against the warrior code to steal prey from other Clans! StarClan doesn’t want us to steal ThunderClan’s prey. We must get prey another…” Blackstar’s tail slapped over his mouth again.

“Doesn’t the warrior code also say that a leader’s word is

the law?" Blackstar sneered to Littlecloud. "We will hunt in ThunderClan's territory. I will take Rowanclaw and Tigerheart with me tomorrow morning."

ShadowClan's leader padded towards his den, ignoring Tawnypelt's protests and Littlecloud's complaints. He curled up in his nest and quickly fell asleep.

Chapter 1: Bramblestar

BRAMBLESTAR

The grass quivered to Bramblestar's left. Tasting the air, he scented a plump brown mouse. He dropped into a hunting crouch and slowly stalked forward. The mouse didn't move, and stayed nibbling on a seed. Bramblestar killed it swiftly with his left forepaw and…suddenly he heard a familiar meow asking for permission to enter his den. Bramblestar blinked open his eyes to find himself lying comfortably in his mossy nest. Bramblestar meowed, "Come in!"

A silver and white she-cat pushed her way through the lichen that was draped over the entrance to his den. She walked with a hint of urgency, worrying Bramblestar. "What is it, Ivypool? I can see something is troubling you."

Ivypool sighed. "I led the border patrol along the ShadowClan border. We scented ShadowClan inside the Twoleg greenleaf clearing."

"Haven't we had enough trouble with Dark Forest recently without ShadowClan causing trouble, too?" Bramblestar muttered unhappily.

Then, with a sigh, he padded out of his den and stood on the Highledge. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" he shouted.

At his words, the Clan gathered around and sat below him, waiting expectantly. "First, I would like to warn you all about ShadowClan. Ivypool told me that she has scented ShadowClan over our border. Border patrols, keep an eye open for ShadowClan."

The Clan nodded in agreement. A few anxious meows cut through the silence, and every cat was tense. A battle with ShadowClan was the last thing any cat wanted.

Hoping to ease the mood, Bramblestar managed to keep his voice calm and steady as he spoke again. “Recently, our two apprentices have trained hard. Their mentors tell me that they are progressing well, so I believe it is time for them to receive their warrior names.” He glanced at Woodpaw and Wavepaw, who shared the same look of excitement and surprise.

Bramblestar beckoned for them to step forward with his tail. “I, Bramblestar, leader of ThunderClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these two apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn. Wavepaw, Woodpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend this Clan, even at the cost of your lives?”

Wavepaw spoke first, her amber eyes glinting in the fading sunlight. “I do.”

Woodpaw echoed her, his tail twitching nervously behind him, his voice quivering slightly. “I do.”

“Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your warrior names: Wavepaw, from this moment you will be known as Wavefur. StarClan honors your bravery and determination, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan.” Bramblestar stepped forward and rested his muzzle on top of Wavefur’s head. Wavefur licked Bramblestar’s shoulder respectfully before walking over to join the other warriors.

“Woodpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Woodpelt. StarClan honors your skill and effort, and we welcome you as a full warrior of ThunderClan.” Woodpelt stood there and licked Bramblestar’s shoulder after he rested his muzzle on her head.

The Clan began to chant the two young warriors’ names as the sun dipped below the horizon. “Wavefur! Woodpelt! Wavefur! Woodpelt!”

“You may not talk after moonhigh. In the tradition of our warrior ancestors, Wavefur and Woodpelt must keep a silent vigil

until dawn, and guard the camp alone while we rest," Bramblestar meowed. Then, he leaped down from the Highledge and took a thrush from the fresh-kill pile. Bramblestar grabbed a vole for Squirrelflight and settled down exhaustedly to eat beside his mate.

Chapter 2: Tawnypelt

[image]

TAWNYPELT

Tawnypelt could believe that Blackstar would even think about stealing another Clan's prey! She couldn't do it! Perhaps she was a traitor, like Blackstar said. But she knew she had to leave ShadowClan, even if it meant becoming a loner. Tawnypelt would not break the warrior code.

She decided that she would say good-bye to Bramblestar and head for the hills above WindClan beyond the Moonpool. Hopefully, she wouldn't run into any patrols. And truthfully, she would probably have better hunting far away from the evil black liquid that covered ShadowClan's hunting grounds.

Tawnypelt padded silently out of the ShadowClan camp, careful not to snap a twig. She slid across the layer of leaves that coated the marshy ground. She headed in the direction of the ThunderClan border, keeping a steady pace as she moved through the night. She decided to stop for the night when she reached the Twoleg path. Curling up into a ball, she quickly fell asleep.

Tawnypelt woke to a thundering snarl. "I can't believe you were once my mate, you traitor!" Blinking open her eyes, she saw Rowanclaw hissing and growling in front of her. She was dismayed to realize that he was blocking her path. She darted forward and scraped her claws right above his eyes. With Rowanclaw blinded momentarily, she was able to bolt across the Twoleg path. Rowanclaw was close behind her, roaring with fury.

Tawnypelt raced through ThunderClan's unfamiliar territory. Rowanclaw crossed the border without a moment's hesitation. She finally recognized the Sky Oak and knew that ThunderClan's camp was close by. Rowanclaw noticed the towering oak too, and came to an immediate halt. "Don't you ever come back!" he hissed. "If you do, you know what to expect!"

Tawnypelt slowed to a walk and continued towards ThunderClan's camp with regret. "StarClan, help me to walk the right path," she murmured.

Chapter 3: Shadepaw

[image]

SHADEPAW

"We're running low on juniper berries," Jayfeather said. "I suppose I'll get Brightheart to help me bring a few back."

Shadepaw nodded. "You might want to know that Icecloud said she found some by the Sky Oak," she told him.

"Thanks," her mentor meowed. "I'll be back before sunhigh, hopefully."

The blind medicine cat sniffed the assortment of herbs one last time before padding out into the clearing, which was illuminated by the faint dawn glow. Shadepaw grabbed some marigold to treat the wounds Floodface had received less than a half-moon ago battling against the fox near the WindClan border, coming to rescue her apprentice, Streampaw, who had accidentally walked into the fox's den. As she trotted over to the warrior's den, she noticed Cloudtail and Brackenfur were walking unsteadily towards the medicine cat den. Cloudtail had a long wound on his left side, but when Shadepaw looked at it closely, she saw that it wasn't too deep. Brackenfur had a small gash on his left forepaw and his nose was dripping scarlet blood. Shadepaw turned back around and padded after them. She chewed up the marigold leaves into a paste and carefully dabbed it onto their wounds. As she pressed a wad of cobwebs onto their wounds, Shadepaw saw the look of grief in Brackenfur's eyes and could not refrain from questioning them any longer. "What happened to you two?" she asked curiously.

Both Cloudtail and Brackenfur hesitated. "Bramblestar told the border patrols to keep an eye on ShadowClan," Cloudtail began. "We saw Blackstar leading Tigerheart and Rowanclaw into our territory. They were quite far away from the border. They were almost at the abandoned Twoleg nest!"

The fur on Shadepaw's neck bristled out of anger and contempt even though she knew that medicine cats were not supposed to have the same Clan rivalries as other cats. Then she saw Littlecloud, ShadowClan's medicine cat, with his gentle, kind eyes that twinkled in the moonlight and his kindhearted smile that seemed to give off a warm glow. Shadepaw quickly reminded herself that Littlecloud was an exception, and the rest of ShadowClan's cats were coldhearted and sinister. They were stealing ThunderClan's prey! Perhaps Graystripe was right when he said that ShadowClan was always "up to something and up to no good". "Typical ShadowClan! How dare they?" she snarled to the two injured warriors.

"Anyways, we fought and finally drove them off. Blackstar ran like the whole of StarClan was on his tail! But…" Cloudtail continued.

"I remember!" Shadepaw interrupted. "I heard Squirrrelflight tell you two, Thornclaw, and Foxleap to patrol the ShadowClan border…" she broke off, confused. "Where are Foxleap and Thornclaw?"

Cloudtail and Brackenfur exchanged a glance that made Shadepaw feel uneasy. "Foxleap is dead," Cloudtail meowed finally. "And Thornclaw is…"

"Thornclaw is dead?" Shadepaw exclaimed, horrified. Her father couldn't be dead! She wouldn't believe, not until she saw his body with her own eyes.

"No. He was injured the least, so he is bringing Foxleap's body back to camp," Cloudtail said.

"Thank StarClan!" Shadepaw meowed with relief. "I couldn't bear it if he was dead!"

Cloudtail and Brackenfur rose to their paws, and walked out of the den together. Shadepaw followed them, and grabbed a plump chaffinch from the fresh-kill pile. Just then, there was a rustling sound as Thornclaw pushed his way through the thorn barrier, dragging Foxleap's battered body behind him. Barely any

fur clung to the dead warrior's body, and what was left was bloodstained, matted, and unkempt. Thornclaw looked like a StarClan warrior, strong and perfectly healthy when compared to Foxleap's lifeless, disheveled body. Thornclaw's only wound was a small gash on his belly that could hardly be seen through his thick, pristine fur.

Looking upward toward Bramblestar's den, Shadepaw saw the ThunderClan leader trotting quickly out of his den. "ShadowClan! Always causing trouble and stealing prey!" he hissed, angrily and loudly. Then, quieter so that Shadepaw had to strain to hear him, he muttered, "I hope Tawnypelt wasn't involved."

Shadepaw felt a pang of sympathy for him. She couldn't imagine Wavefur or Woodpelt, her siblings, being in another Clan! And she did know what it was like to lose a sister. An image of Streampaw, dragged into the camp by Floodface, burned in front of her green eyes. She could see the fatal wound on her sister's neck, oozing blood which was beginning to form a crimson pool on the ground. The feelings of panic and desperation rushed through Shadepaw again. She felt her paws rushing across the ground and her claws quickly reaching for cobwebs. And she was racing back to her sister, frantically pressing the cobwebs onto the lethal wound. Streampaw's sky blue eyes, distant and unfocused, opened for the last time and trembling, the young she-cat uttered her final words. "StarClan has…spoken to me," the dying apprentice wheezed. "*Tiger will meet the shadows, and a leader will be lost. Thunder's second will find the stars and the lion will set the forest ablaze."* Streampaw's flanks rose for the final time and with a shivering gasp, they fell still.

Shuddering at the thought of Streampaw's ominous prophecy, she barely even heard Bramblestar's next words. "ShadowClan must pay for this! The next time they set on paw over the border, they will be sorry!" Bramblestar declared. "If we scent ShadowClan over our border one more time, we must attack them instantly!"

Chapter 4: Bramblestar

[image]

BRAMBLESTAR

As Bramblestar finished speaking, he wondered if Tawnypelt was stealing prey from ThunderClan. No it couldn't be! Tawnypelt was a good cat, and she was born a ThunderClan cat! *But her father, Tigerstar, was the most ambitious, greedy, and malicious cat in the forest,* a dark voice whispered inside of his head. No, Tigerstar was his father too and he was a good cat!

How many innocent cats were there in ShadowClan that would suffer if ThunderClan attacked the camp? The kits, the elders, the queens, possibly his sister if she truly was innocent…no, he knew couldn't think like that. How many blameworthy cats would get away with prey-stealing if he *didn't* attack the ShadowClan camp?

Bramblestar sighed. Firestar would have known what to do. His mentor had been able to handle just about every situation perfectly. It was Firestar who kept his Clan calm when Bramblestar's father, the sinister Tigerstar, led an army of Dark Forest warriors to attack the four Clans and it was Firestar who sacrificed his ninth life to kill Tigerstar's spirit.

Just as he was about to drift into sleep, Bramblestar heard a soft, gentle mew. Recognizing Shadepaw's voice, he meowed, "Come in!" The pretty black apprentice was carrying two voles, and she dropped one at his feet. Bramblestar muttered his thanks before asking, "Why have you come here? Have you received a sign from StarClan?"

Shadepaw shook her head and took a bite of her vole. She turned and fixed her sparkling green eyes on him. Bramblestar felt as if Shadepaw could see right through him. Then she meowed unexpectedly, "You're thinking about Tawnypelt, aren't you?"

Caught by surprise, Bramblestar did not know how to reply. “Uh, well…maybe…well, yes,” he stammered.

Bramblestar was surprised to see sympathy in her eyes. She murmured, “I know what it’s like to lose your sister.” He realized she was thinking about Streampaw. “You have it worse. I can at least see my sister at Gatherings and when we run into each other patrolling the borders, but you never see your sister at all. She is…”he began.

“Wrong again,” Shadepaw interrupted. “I see my sister at the Moonpool sometimes, and at least my sister isn’t an enemy warrior.”

Bramblestar didn’t know how to respond to that. They ate the rest of their fresh-kill in silence. Shadepaw finally devoured the last bite of her vole. She stood to leave, and her glowing green gaze rested on his amber eyes. “Jayfeather will be back soon,” she said. “It is past sunhigh now. If you need anything, I’ll be in my den.”

Shadepaw was almost to the entrance when she turned around and said, “I can guarantee that wherever she is and whatever she is doing now, Tawnypelt is thinking about you.”

Bramblestar was about to find out that she was right.

Chapter 5: Shadepaw

[image]

SHADEPAW

Shadepaw knew what she said was true even before Tawnypelt came stumbling through the thorn barrier. Her father leaped forward immediately, snarling and hissing at Tawnypelt. He was about to claw her pelt off when Bramblestar came racing down from the Highledge and shoved Thornclaw away. “No one will touch a hair on her pelt until I hear her story,” Bramblestar snarled at the gathering crowd. “That’s my sister you’re staring at!”

Shadepaw noticed that Tawnypelt was gasping for breath. “ShadowClan…need food. Blackstar said to…steal ThunderClan’s prey. I did not want to steal…from you. I ran…away last night so that I didn’t…have to steal from you. I came here. Rowanclaw saw me…and chased me over the border. Said…never to come back,” Tawnypelt panted.

Bramblestar curled his lip. “Why does ShadowClan need our prey?” he spat.

Tawnypelt looked him straight in the eyes. “We think it’s Twolegs,” she meowed earnestly. Shocked meows and a few nervous whimpers rose from the ThunderClan cats. Many seasons ago, Twolegs had destroyed their old forest home with their tree-eating monsters. The Clan cats had fled from their old home and taken a long, perilous journey over the mountains to the lake. Some cats were old enough to remember the terrible voyage they had, had to take to find their current home around the lake.

Shadepaw could tell that Bramblestar was surprised, too. “Twolegs? How? Great StarClan, nothing is ever peaceful these days!” he exclaimed.

Tawnypelt took a deep breath before continuing. “About a moon ago, two of our kits, Rabbitkit and Leopardkit, snuck out of

camp. Toadfoot saw them and followed them. The kits found this huge black puddle on the ground and Leopardkit dared Rabbitkit to drink some. Toadfoot ran towards them and tried to stop them, but Rabbitkit had already drunk some. Rabbitkit died before sunrise the next day."

"That's terrible!" Bramblestar meowed.

"The black liquid is all over ShadowClan's territory. It smells terrible, too. It smells like monsters on a Thunderpath. Our prey is dying from the black liquid and half of what's not dead has the black stuff in its fur. But, starving or not starving, I wouldn't break the warrior code and steal another Clan's prey," Tawnypelt finished.

Bramblestar turned to face the crowd. "Falcontail," he said. The dark brown warrior looked at ThunderClan's leader. "Go and get Tawnypelt that thrush on the top of the fresh-kill pile." Falcontail nodded and dropped the plump thrush at Tawnypelt's paws.

Tawnypelt pressed her nose into his side. "Thank you, Bramblestar. I'll leave tomorrow. I suppose I'll get used to the life of a loner," she meowed gratefully.

Bramblestar turned his amber eyes on her. "Who said anything about you leaving or becoming a loner?"he asked her. "You may stay here as long you wish to."

"Thank you," Tawnypelt purred."I am forever grateful."

Bramblestar licked her nose. "You're my sister. I won't ever forget that."He seemed to remember the crowd that was watching and he stepped back. "Go to your dens," he commanded. "And no rumoring or gossiping."

Shadepaw turned and headed towards the den. It was nearly moonrise and Jayfeather wasn't back yet. She decided that if he wasn't back by moonrise she would go and look for him. She was sorting herbs again when she heard the soft pawsteps of a cat entering the den. Shadepaw looked up and found herself looking

into Jayfeather's sightless blue eyes."Where were you? It's nearly moonrise!" she asked.

Jayfeather dropped the juniper berries at her feet. He also had some tansy and catmint with him. "We need some catmint and tansy with leaf-bare approaching. It best to collect it now, before leaf-bare's frigid winds kill half of it."

"You won't believe what happened!" Shadepaw exclaimed, eager to tell her mentor about Tawnypelt's arrival. "Bramblestar's…"

"Yes, yes, I know, Shadepaw," Jayfeather interrupted her. "Tawnypelt showed up and Bramblestar let her stay."

"How do you know that?" Shadepaw asked confusedly. "You weren't there!"

"I can read your thoughts, remember?"Jayfeather said. "Anyways, could you help me put these herbs away?"

Shadepaw sighed. "Sure," she meowed. Jayfeather looked at her as if he was about to say something, and then shook his head. Shadepaw helped Jayfeather to put away the herbs he had gathered without complaining. Finally, the last juniper berry had been stored away. Yawning, she said, "I'm tired. I am going to sleep."

As she settled into her nest, Jayfeather said, "Has StarClan spoken to you?"

Shadepaw almost told him about Streampaw's dreadful prophecy. But then, she realized that Jayfeather might be angry if she had spoken with StarClan and he hadn't. "No," she lied. "Have you had a sign from StarClan?"

Jayfeather hesitated. "Yes," he finally said. "I spoke to Hollyleaf. She said, 'An unknown threat is near. Wind alone can destroy our Clan.'"

Shadepaw meowed, "Jayfeather, WindClan must be the wind of Hollyleaf's prophecy! We must do something!"

Jayfeather pondered her words. “Well,” he meowed slowly, considering his words. “We’re not certain that the wind is WindClan.”

Shadepaw knew she had to tell her mentor about Streampaw’s prophecy. “Actually,” Streampaw said. “I did receive a prophecy from StarClan. Streampaw’s final words were, ‘Tiger will meet the shadows, and a leader will be lost. Thunder’s second will find the stars and the lion will set the forest ablaze.’ Do you know what it means?”

Jayfeather shook his head. “All I know is that the whole of StarClan foresees grave danger,” he meowed ominously.

Chapter 6: Bramblestar

BRAMBLESTAR

"It's time for our kits to be apprenticed," Bramblestar whispered excitedly to his mate.

Squirrelflight nodded. "I hope you chose good mentors for them," she meowed.

"I did," Bramblestar responded. "Brackenfur, Lilyblossom, and Seedfur."

"I'll groom them and bring them out," Squirrelflight said.

Bramblestar padded away and leaped onto the Highledge. His kits were going to be apprenticed! "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!" he shouted.

Grasskit, Groundkit, and Cavekit were nudged to the front of the group by Squirrelflight. "Grasskit, Groundkit, and Cavekit," he began. "You are now six moons old and it is time for you to be apprenticed. Grasskit, from this day on, until you receive you warrior name, you will be known as Grasspaw."

"Lilyblossom, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You will be mentor to Grasspaw, and I expect you to pass on all that you know to Grasspaw," Bramblestar meowed.

Lilyblossom and Grasspaw touched noses. Bramblestar heard Grasspaw meow excitedly, "Can we go hunting now?"

"Shh," Lilyblossom whispered. "Watch your brothers, Grasspaw."

"Groundkit," Bramblestar continued. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Groundpaw."

“Brackenfur,” he meowed. “You are ready for another apprentice. You will be mentor to Groundpaw, and I expect you to pass on all that you know.”

Groundpaw, with his brown eyes shining, touched noses with Brackenfur. “Cavekit,” Bramblestar said. “From this moment on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Cavepaw.”

“Seedfur,” he finished. “You are ready for an apprentice. You will be mentor to Cavepaw, and I expect you to pass on all that you know.”

After Cavepaw touched noses with Seedfur, the Clan chanted the new apprentices’ names. “Grasspaw! Groundpaw! Cavepaw!”

It’s wonderful to see them as apprentices at last, Bramblestar thought. *I can’t imagine how amazing it will be when they become warriors.*

Yes, it’s a wonderful day.

Chapter 7: Bramblestar

[image]

BRAMBLESTAR

Five sunrises had passed since Bramblestar's kits' naming ceremony. ShadowClan had continued to hunt in ThunderClan's territory, but Bramblestar had tolerated it due to Tawnypelt's pleading. "The Gathering is only a half-moon away. After that, ShadowClan must stop hunting in our territory," Bramblestar had told her.

Tawnypelt hadn't looked completely happy about that, but she hadn't said anything. Instead, she had merely nodded her head and padded back to the warrior den. Now, Bramblestar was beginning to regret that decision. The fresh-kill pile did look slightly smaller and Bramblestar wondered how much prey ShadowClan was taking.

He would keep his word though. But the Gathering couldn't come soon enough for him. The stench of ShadowClan near the Twoleg path was nearly unbearable, and the prey in that area was growing scarce. How much closer to camp would ShadowClan come now that the prey near the border was disappearing?

It wasn't a matter of sympathy. Bramblestar was concerned about the black liquid, but that didn't give ShadowClan the right to steal ThunderClan's prey. *What would Firestar do if he was still alive?* Bramblestar asked himself. *Well, he would go talk to Blackstar, which was never very effective. It's not as if asking Blackstar nicely not to steal our prey would work.*

He decided to ask Squirrelflight what he should do. His mate was eating a thrush when he walked up to her. "Squirrelflight," he meowed as he sat down beside her. "I don't know what to do about ShadowClan. Could you help me?"

Squirrelflight looked up at him, her green gaze burning his

fur. “I don’t need to help you, Bramblestar. Just follow your heart,” she replied.

Bramblestar sighed. “I don’t even know what my heart wants me to do these days,” he said. “Everything is so hard. *Firestar* would have known what to do. *Firestar* would have fixed this problem already.”

“You’re being too hard on yourself. Take a deep breath and relax for a moment,” Squirrelflight meowed.

“Help me, Squirrelflight, please,” he insisted.

“If you really want guidance, I’m not the cat you should be asking. Go to the Moonpool tonight and ask StarClan,” she said. “And go quickly. It’s past sunhigh now. You should take Shadepaw. Jayfeather is a good medicine cat, but he might slow you down a bit.”

Bramblestar nodded and headed towards the medicine cat den. As he walked over there, he noticed Tawnypelt lying miserably outside the warrior’s den. He stopped beside her and licked her fur. She looked up. “You’d rather be with ShadowClan, wouldn’t you?” he asked her.

“Yes,” Tawnypelt meowed after a moment’s hesitation. “You’ve been very nice and all, but I don’t feel like this is my home.”

“I understand,” Bramblestar said. “I wouldn’t want to live with ShadowClan, or RiverClan or WindClan for that matter. Just imagine you’re in ShadowClan’s camp, sleeping on the nice marshy ground.” He shuddered inwardly at the thought.

Tawnypelt nodded. “Thank you,” she meowed. “You’re a true friend.”

Bramblestar dipped his head. “Any time,” he replied.

He trotted into the medicine cat’s den. Shadepaw was there, alone, studying some catmint leaves. Bramblestar meowed a greeting and she spun around, startled. “We’re going to the

Moonpool tonight.”

Chapter 8: Shadepaw

[image]

SHADEPAW

It was dawn when Bramblestar woke from his dream at the Moonpool. He didn't look happy. "What did StarClan say?" she asked.

"'Firestar spoke with me," Bramblestar meowed. "He said, 'You will know when it is time for this to end. Her fate is inevitable.'"

Bramblestar looked up at the stars and snorted. "Wonderful help, you know," he shouted sarcastically.

"Bramblestar," Shadepaw meowed. "StarClan knows what they are doing. Firestar was probably right. I overheard you talking to Squirrelflight yesterday. Firestar is telling you the same thing as her. Follow your heart, Bramblestar."

"What does the 'her fate is inevitable' part mean?" Bramblestar asked Shadepaw.

"StarClan knows, but it doesn't sound good," Shadepaw replied. "All of these prophecies and…" she quickly silenced herself, remembering that Bramblestar didn't know about either of the prophecies.

But it was too late. Bramblestar was giving her a questioning stare. "What prophecies?" he asked.

"No prophecies," Shadepaw meowed quickly.

"Shadepaw, stop lying to me. Just tell me," he said impatiently.

"Before she died, Streampaw gave me a prophecy. She said, '*Tiger will meet the shadows, and a leader will be lost. Thunder's second*

will find the stars and the lion will set the forest ablaze,'" Shadepaw gave in.

A slight understanding flashed through Bramblestar's eyes. "Tiger is me," he meowed. "And the shadows is ShadowClan. 'A leader will be lost.' Does that mean I'm going to die?"

"It couldn't be!" Shadepaw shouted desperately.

"Thunder is ThunderClan," Bramblestar continued. "But I don't understand the rest of it."

"You really won't want to hear the next one," Shadepaw meowed.

Bramblestar sighed. "Go on," he said.

"An unknown threat is near. Wind alone can destroy our Clan," Shadepaw said.

"StarClan, no! How could you do this to us?" Bramblestar exclaimed.

"Be prepared. Danger is near, and we must be ready to face it," Shadepaw meowed.

Chapter 9: Bramblestar

[image]

BRAMBLESTAR

Bramblestar had only just arrived back at camp when Lilyblossom and Grasspaw came rushing over to him. “We saw strange cats hunting. They smelled terrible,” Grasspaw meowed.

“That would be ShadowClan scent,” Lilyblossom said.

“Where were they?” Bramblestar asked her. “Didn’t I tell you to stay far away from the Twoleg path?”

“They were by the Sky Oak,” Lilyblossom said.

“We must drive them out,” Bramblestar meowed.

Then, he leaped up onto the Highledge. “Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” he called.

“ShadowClan has been seen hunting near the Sky Oak. We must drive them out. Lionblaze, Icecloud, Sandstorm, Dustpelt, Bumblestripe, and Dovewing will go,” he meowed.

Bramblestar noticed Tawnypelt pushing her way to the front of the crowd. “Bramblestar, you promised you wouldn’t attack them!“

“They’re too close to camp. Go and attack now, before they leave. We must teach ShadowClan a lesson,” Bramblestar ordered.

He noticed that Tawnypelt, staying by the Highledge as the rest of ThunderClan dispersed, looked crestfallen. But he knew that he had done what was right for his Clan.

As he headed back towards his den, he heard the soft

pawsteps of a cat following him. He spun around to see Tawnypelt staring at him intently. “You promised,” she whispered. Then, louder, she added, “ShadowClan has the black liquid all over its territory. The prey is scarce and…”

Bramblestar glared at her. “I don’t care, Tawnypelt!” he meowed sharply. “That’s ShadowClan’s problem, not ThunderClan’s! If you cared so much about ShadowClan, you should have stayed there.”

A shadow of hurt passed over Tawnypelt’s face. She whirled around, with her neck fur bristling. Bramblestar realized that he had been too harsh with her. “Tawnypelt!” he called after her. She didn’t turn around. *I never do anything right, do I?* Bramblestar thought to himself. “StarClan, help me!”

Chapter 10: Shadepaw

[image]

SHADEPAW

The attack patrol came back unscratched. “Bramblestar,” Lionblaze called. When Bramblestar came out of his den, his tail was drooping. “What happened to him?” Shadepaw asked Jayfeather.

“He got annoyed with Tawnypelt for worrying about ShadowClan. He snapped at her, and Tawnypelt won’t even speak to him now,” Jayfeather answered.

“What happened?” Bramblestar muttered half-heartedly, and almost inaudibly.

Lionblaze exchanged a confused glance with Sandstorm. “Well,” Lionblaze meowed. “They were already gone when we showed up.”

“We’ll worry about this later. Everyone, just let me have a nap,” Bramblestar meowed tersely. He dragged his paws back to his den. “I’d better go fix this,” Shadepaw meowed. “Sorry, Jayfeather, you’ll have to collect goldenrod on your own.”

She padded into Bramblestar’s den without even asking for permission. “Hello, Bluestar,” she meowed.

“Bluestar is dead,” Bramblestar murmured without even lifting his head.

“I know that, mouse-brain! But, according to Graystripe’s stories, Bluestar fell into a deep depression before she died. You’re certainly moping around enough. Do you think Tawnypelt is going to forgive you if you’re just miserable all day?” she asked.

Bramblestar looked at her with sadness in his eyes. “I

already said it. What is there I can do?" he asked her.

"Have you ever heard of apologizing?" Shadepaw asked.

A spark of hope flashed in his amber eyes. "Good idea," he meowed, rising to his feet. "I'll go do that now." He padded out of the den.

Shadepaw followed Bramblestar, hiding in the shadows. "Tawnypelt," Bramblestar meowed.

"What do you want with me? Just leave me alone!" Tawnypelt hissed.

"Please, Tawnypelt, just give me a moment," Bramblestar pleaded.

"Make it quick!" she spat.

"I'm sorry, Tawnypelt, I really am. I'm sorry about ShadowClan's problems, but I have to put my Clan first. Can't you see that?" Bramblestar meowed.

Tawnypelt hesitated. "You always had more loyalty to your Clan than me. I'm sorry that I thought otherwise. Go," she meowed. "You've made your choice and I've made mine."

"Yours?" Bramblestar echoed.

"Yes," Tawnypelt answered. "I was never meant to be a ThunderClan cat. I am going to find the fifth Clan you once told me about, what was it called? SunClan? SnowClan? SootClan?"

"SkyClan," Bramblestar meowed. "Tawnypelt, are you sure?"

Tawnypelt nodded. "Goodbye, Bramblestar," she said, licking his head.

Bramblestar looked at her, his eyes shining with sadness. "Goodbye, Tawnypelt," he whispered regretfully. "May StarClan light your path."

Chapter 11: Bramblestar

[image]

BRAMBLESTAR

It had been three days since Tawnypelt had left. ShadowClan hadn't been scented that close to camp again, but Bramblestar was still worried. How much further over the boundaries would ShadowClan come?

Bramblestar had only just woken up when Lionblaze came running into his den with Brackenfur, Thornclaw, Rosepetal, and Icecloud close behind him. "ShadowClan has moved their scent markers into our territory!" Lionblaze hissed. "Bramblestar, you must do something!"

"Who said I wouldn't?" Bramblestar responded. He ran out to the Highledge. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!"

"We are going to attack the ShadowClan camp," Bramblestar meowed. "They have taken this too far. Lionblaze, Icecloud, Brackenfur, Thornclaw, Rosepetal, Toadstep, Cherrypelt, Molefur, Sandstorm, Graystripe, Squirrelflight, Cloudtail, Bumblestripe, Blossomfall, Wavefur, Woodpelt, Ivypool, Dovewing, Lilyblossom, and Seedfur, you will come with me to attack ShadowClan. The rest of you will guard our camp."

He led his cats through the forest, past the Sky Oak and over the Twoleg path in ThunderClan's territory where ShadowClan had placed the new scent markers. He led them past the half-bridge, which was supposed to be part of ThunderClan's territory. He led them over the Twoleg path in ShadowClan's territory, avoiding the puddles of the foul-smelling black liquid. And then, they were at ShadowClan's camp. "ThunderClan, attack!" he cried.

Within seconds, the clearing was filled with writhing screaming cats. Toadfoot leaped at Bramblestar and swiped his

claws across Bramblestar's nose. Bramblestar scraped his claws right above Toadfoot's eyes and Toadfoot was momentarily blinded by blood. Bramblestar pushed him onto his side, and began clawing at his belly mercilessly. Tigerheart dragged him off of Toadfoot and landed a death blow onto Bramblestar's neck.

Bramblestar looked around. He was surrounded by a bunch of StarClan warriors, and one of them was a faint image of himself. When he looked the faint image of himself in the eyes, he saw himself, unmoving with blood pouring out of his neck. A StarClan warrior, Bluestar, stepped forward. "Bramblestar, you are losing a life," she said.

Firestar stepped forward. "Remember, her fate is inevitable. Don't mourn for too long. Your Clan needs you," he meowed.

"'Her fate is inevitable.' Who is she?" Bramblestar asked Firestar. But the starry warriors were already fading. He found himself lying on the marshy ground of ShadowClan's camp. He rose unsteadily to his feet. He was about to leap at Tigerheart, who was battling Sandstorm, when he heard Rowanclaw cry, "Blackstar!"

The cats stopped fighting. Blackstar was lying on the ground with blood gushing from his neck. He noticed Littlecloud walking towards the ShadowClan leader. "You brought this upon yourself," Littlecloud meowed.

Blackstar's eyes opened weakly. "Littlecloud…" he began to speak, but the effort was too much for him.

Bramblestar noticed an unmoving heap of orange fur. "No! Squirrelflight!" he cried, racing over to her side. He glared at Rowanclaw with undisguised hatred, and Rowanclaw was looking at him with the same look of animosity. "I won't forget Blackstar," Rowanclaw growled at him.

"And I won't forget my mate!" Bramblestar snarled back at Rowanclaw. "Stay out of my territory!"

As the ThunderClan cats were almost out of the camp, Rowanclaw meowed, "This isn't over, Bramblestar. Don't you ever

forget ShadowClan's threat."

Epilogue

[image]

EPILOGUE

Littlecloud and Rowanclaw padded through WindClan's territory. They walked through open moorland with Rowanclaw whispering about his revenge on ThunderClan. "After I receive my nine lives, we will attack their camp. We mustn't let them forget our threat."

"Perhaps it would be better to let our cats recover first?" Littlecloud suggested.

"You're right, Littlecloud. But as soon as our cats recover, we will attack. Bramblestar will pay for Blackstar's death," Rowanclaw meowed.

Rowanclaw tasted the air and paused. "WindClan!" he hissed to Littlecloud.

Just a few moments later, Ashfoot appeared leading Heathertail and Crowfeather behind her. "Greetings, Ashfoot," Rowanclaw said, dipping his head.

"She's Ashstar now. Onestar died four sunrises ago," Heathertail meowed.

"Congratulations, Ashstar," Rowanclaw said. "I am sorry to hear about Onestar, though."

Ashstar looked at him steadily. "Why are you trespassing on WindClan territory?" she asked with a hint of menace in her voice.

"Blackstar died today when ThunderClan attacked our camp," Rowanclaw responded coolly.

"Why would they do that?" Ashstar asked.

“StarClan knows. ThunderClan is…” Rowanclaw began to answer. But Littlecloud hissed, “Tell the truth, Rowanclaw. Or are you ashamed of Blackstar’s actions?”

After shooting a glare at Littlecloud, Rowanclaw said, “We were stealing their prey because ours is being poisoned and killed by some terrible black liquid.”

“That is terrible,” Ashstar agreed. “But it doesn’t give you the right to steal another Clan’s prey.”

“Does that make it okay that ThunderClan killed Blackstar?” Rowanclaw asked her.

Ashstar didn’t answer him. “Let them pass,” Ashstar ordered Heathertail and Crowfeather.

Rowanclaw and Littlecloud continued walking towards the Moonpool. Finally, they stopped. In front of them was the Moonpool. “It’s time,” Littlecloud meowed. “Rowanclaw, it’s time for you to receive your nine lives.”

****

“It’s nearly moonhigh,” Shadepaw meowed to Bramblestar, whose nose was pressed into Squirrelflight’s side.

With a sigh, Bramblestar heaved himself to his feet and slunk up onto the Highledge. “Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the Highledge for a Clan meeting!” he called, with his tail drooping.

“I say these words before StarClan, and the spirit of Squirrelflight, that they may hear and approve of my choice,” he mumbled so that the audience had to strain to hear him. “The new deputy of ThunderClan is Lionblaze.”

He leaped down from the Highledge and settled down beside Squirrelflight's dead body again. “How was this an unknown threat? What did wind have to do with this?” Shadepaw asked Jayfeather.

He replied, “Streampaw’s prophecy has come true. The unknown threat has not yet arrived.”

Excerpt from Warriors: The Unknown Threat Series Book #2: Endless Rivalry

PROLOGUE

Seedfur trotted through the forest. The only sounds were the faint thuds of Seedfur's pawsteps. He trotted onwards, following the route he had taken many times before. And he stopped at the half-bridge and waited.

After a few moments of waiting, the leaves rustled and a gray tom with white stripes padded forward. They greeted each other like old friends. The gray tom was named Thorn, and he was Bone's grandson. He never knew what it was like to live in BloodClan for it had ceased moons before he was born. Thorn had agreed to help Seedfur on his mission and now it was time for planning. "Hello, Seedfur," Thorn meowed.

"Hello, Thorn," Seedfur meowed. "I need your help. Bramblestar can be brought down by force, but Lionblaze is another story."

"Quite simple," Thorn meowed.

"How do you think he can die?" Seedfur asked Thorn.

"Just stuff a mouse with deathberries. It's truly simple. Every cat has a weakness," Thorn answered.

"Thorn, you're brilliant. Should we execute the plan now?" Seedfur asked.

"No," Thorn said. "Let ShadowClan take care of a few of them, and then we can take over easier."

"After two battles with ShadowClan, then?" Seedfur asked Thorn.

“Yes. You can meet me here at moonhigh. We will rule ThunderClan, and we will take over the other Clans after that,’ Thorn said.

“I will see you then. May the Dark Forest darken your path,” Seedfur meowed.

“And yours,” Thorn said, dipping his head.

Behind the bushes, a cat crouched, watching in disbelief.

It was Shadecloud.